

GHOST TOWN OF ALMADEN RAZED BY CCC

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Historic Mining Village Is Lost Under Beautifying Efforts of Summer Workers

SAN JOSE, Sept. 15.—Almaden, one of the earliest and most colorful of the state's mining towns, dating back to the days of Spanish rule in California, now is but a memory in the minds of a few surviving old-timers.

The ravages of time, abetted by the more recent activities of an encampment of Citizens' Conservation Corps on the site of the old mines, have practically obliterated the few remaining original landmarks of what once made history in the international courts of law.

The historic old "ghost town" is gone.

True, the ancient shafts burrowed deep into the ground, and the tunnelings high on the slopes of the Santa Cruz mountain range remain, but the old adobe structures erected by the Spanish miners, the rambling wooden buildings of the mine foremen and officials, and the brick smelting works for refining quicksilver have been demolished.

MINERS' HOMES GO

The homes of the miners have given way to a long line of modern barracks to house the conservation corps. And the catina, where on pay day the hot-blooded Spanish would gather to gamble, drink, fight and do a little incidental murdering, has been replaced by a modern beer and dance pavilion.

Tales there are innumerable told of the diggings in the early '50's and '60's, but one of the most unusual is that of the visit of Baron Rothschild. Rothschild was lessee of the famous Old Almaden mines in Spain, which for years produced the bulk of the world's supply of quicksilver. With the development of the New Almaden mines in 1845, Rothschild found a serious competitor for his world monopoly, and he came West to inspect and possibly buy out the New Almaden owners.

TOOK NO CHANCES

He brought with him two solemn-faced western gunmen for body guards. Rivalry between other envious mine operators had made him fear for his life. The day he descended into the mines he posted his body guards at the mouth of the shaft with drawn guns. These they kept leveled on the man who slowly paid out the cable for lowering the lift. At the slightest sign of treachery they were ordered to shoot to kill. Rothschild took no chances on being suddenly shot to the bottom of the shaft with sufficient force to maim or kill him.

Almaden, Famous Old Mining Town, Will Hold Fiesta Aug. 31

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ALMADEN, Santa Clara County, Aug. 23. — "Almaden Day," a reminder of the old mining days when both Cornish and Mexican miners celebrated their native holidays here, will be observed August 31, according to Mrs. Constance Kambish, secretary of the New Almaden Historical Society.

Sponsored by the Almaden Improvement Club, the event will include a parade, a barbecue, folk dance exhibitions, street dancing and concession booths.

Conducted tours of the Almaden Museum, featuring old mining exhibits and other items of Californiana, will be held from noon until 6 p.m. The museum, which is operated by the historical society, is open daily from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Proceeds from the celebration will go towards the cost of constructing a community center for the town's people.

The historical society is sponsoring a display at the State

Fair in Sacramento and will also enter an exhibit in the coming Santa Clara County Fair.

Almaden Is Charming, Historic

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New and old add up to a lot of charm at Almaden in Santa Clara county.

Vieing for attention are spacious lawn-bordered swimming pools and early California adobe homes.

The quaintness of its founding days is remarkably well preserved in this little village near San Jose.

Don't be baffled by signs reading "New Almaden" for that is what some of its citizens insist in calling the old historic spot. Correctly it is "Almaden" as U.S. Post Office records show. The California State Auto Association's official map shows it to be Almaden.

Whether it be Almaden or "New Almaden," however, here is a spot your family will enjoy visiting. There are enchanting old Spanish adobes with patios cloistering towering cactus plants. A privately owned museum displays many fascinating objects which graphically tell the history of Almaden.

Of special interest are the

ruins of the quicksilver mine, located at the head of the tree-shaded street which winds lazily through Almaden.

It was here that commercial mining was first seen in California. An historical plaque marks the location on Alamitos Creek.

This Alamitos Creek digging was small compared to the high-pitched operations of the quicksilver mine. Because quicksilver is used in gold mining, the gold rush of 1849 produced a big demand for the slippery silver. Almaden became famous as one of the most productive quicksilver mines in the world.

Very little remains of this operation today. The headquarters building sags in ruins alongside a deep ore pit now filled with water.

As the motorist enters Almaden, a large white mansion with spacious lawns and two large swimming pools looms to the left. This is the "Casa Grande" of the village and was originally

the home of the mine operators. Now called "Club Almaden," it operates for the public as a resort center.

Don Stuart, zone manager for Pontiac Motor Division provided the motor journey auto. It is the 1953 Pontiac de luxe station wagon.

Vitals of the station wagon: 8 cylinders, 122 horsepower; dual-range Hydramatic (giving two separate ranges of power); 6-passenger (also available in 8-passenger); power steering.

Features of the station wagon: "We find more and more families purchasing station wagons for their automobiles," Stuart said. "Mom likes its ease of handling when she picks up the kids and groceries."

Stuart pointed out Pontiac's back seat which folds to floor level, increasing the carrying space of the Pontiac. "With the tail gate lowered," continued Stuart, "loads from 15 to 20 feet long can be carried."